

Education in Palestine Campaign

Palestine 101



About the Alternative Tourism Group-Study Center (ATG)

Alternative Tourism group (ATG) invites people of goodwill everywhere to a journey of truth and transformation that will reveal the truth about the oppressive reality that the Palestinian people have suffered under decades of a bitter and cruel occupation. Despite the painful dispossession of their rights, livelihoods, and properties, Palestinians have preserved their dignity, faith, and capacity for hope.

Palestine is a singular experience seen from any perspective - history, religion, culture, and politics. It is the home of the three monotheistic world religions; Christianity, Islam and Judaism and, therefore, offers a unique experience to visitors. Sadly the intractable conflict that has plagued the region extends to this day in the form of the Israeli occupation has left Palestinians stateless. While the bitter struggle goes on, Palestinians display a vigorous spirit and remain rooted to their just claims for a homeland.

The ATG calls people, on behalf of the larger Palestinian population to a matchless experience. Visit us to learn about our history, religions, conflicts, and unique culture, and traditions. The Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) is a Palestinian NGO which specializes in tours and pilgrimages that include a critical examination of the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land. Established in 1995, ATG operates according to the tenets of "justice tourism". This form of tourism holds as its central goals the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, and affirmative cultural exchanges between the visitor and host through one-on-one interactions, the protection of the environment, and political/historical education. Over the years, ATG has also grown into a well accepted research-advocacy organization whose studies are widely distributed and well received within Palestine and overseas. They serve as useful reference points for academics and activists around the world.

ATG works to encourage all tourism operators to abandon exploitive mass tourism practices and to adopt forms of tourism that positively affect the host population. ATG thus seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people.

Our Objectives:

- To transform the tendencies of mass tourism in “the Holy Land” to establish a more human-oriented tourism.
- To help tourists develop a better understanding of Arab Palestinian culture and history through direct contact with local communities. .
- To break down the negative stereotypes of Palestine and its people and promote knowledge of Palestinian culture and the socio-political situation in Palestine, especially the ongoing occupation.

- To achieve fairness between Palestinian and Israeli tourism sectors by using Palestinian infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, transportation, guides, etc.)
- To augment the number of tourists visiting Palestine and increase the length of their stay in Palestinian areas.
- To encourage instructive and authentic meetings with the Palestinian people to develop amongst tourists an objective understanding of everyday realities of the Israeli Occupation.
- To offer tourists the opportunity to engage in volunteer work with non-governmental organizations such as olive harvesting and planting trees, so they will return as advocates for justice.

In 1997, ATG initiated a programme that would put visitors directly in contact with Palestinian families thorough a direct encounter. ATG assisted in renovating homes in the Bethlehem area towards this – now an active ongoing initiative.

In 2006 ATG won the prestigious international TO DO award for Socially Responsible Tourism within the framework of the 41st International Tourism Exchange in Berlin.

ATG published the first comprehensive Palestinian guidebook -Palestine and Palestinians- an invitation to discover Palestine through the eyes of Palestinians. It is an authoritative travel book on Palestine available in French, English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. It provides an in-depth, updated account of Palestinian culture: history, archaeology, religion, architecture and politics.

ATG was the rallying force behind the publication of the Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land. This was launched in November 2008 by the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism and provides guidelines for a fair and advantageous tourism for all.

ATG produced the Guidelines for Pilgrimage – a document for visionary pilgrims who seek authentic, human encounters by connecting with Palestinian Christians -- the “Living Stones” who share their faith. The book includes Biblical reflections, and ways in which a visitor can engage in profound preparation for their pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Our programmes are both critical and experiential in nature. They include:

- Tours led by our specially-trained guides to key sites: Jerusalem , Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Tel Aviv/Jaffa , Haifa, Nazareth and other cities and towns; Villages , Palestinian refugees camps, Bedouin communities and the Israeli West

Bank settlements (colonies) in working class communities, centers of commercial life and religious sites.

- Encounters with Palestinians and Israelis, academics, political leaders, government officials, NGO staff members, and local people.
- Opportunities to experience local life and interact with families through accommodation in Palestinian homes.
- Interfaith encounters including meetings with Muslim, Jewish, and Christians personalities.
- Special programmes planned in co-operation with Palestinian and Israeli academic institutions, including opportunities to engage in research projects.
- Special tours designed around specific issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, pre-1948 Palestinian society, refugees, the status of women, conflicts of religion state, conflicting historical narratives, development issues, pilgrimages and the like.

ATG works with a wide range of groups and delegations, including

- International solidarity groups,
- Academic and fact-finding delegations
- Church groups concerned with issues of social justice
- Diplomats, journalists and researchers
- NGOs and political organizations
- Tourists and pilgrims' groups
- University Students

By Choosing ATG you will gain

1. A fair trip to the Holy Land.
2. A personal, unforgettable experience where every individual request is granted.
3. A meaningful encounter with the local communities.

Contact us on:

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Beit Sahour, Palestine

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About Palestine

Palestine has always been a center of political, cultural, social, and spiritual life. A testament to Palestine's ancient past, the country's archaeological history is incredibly rich and diverse. Innumerable excavated sites are found throughout Palestine and a huge variety of artifacts have been discovered: ancient tools, pottery, sculptures, mosaics, drawings, cave dwellings, burial places, temples, shrines, castles, fortresses, and even entire cities.

By virtue of Palestine's position geographically – linking Europe, Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Asia – it became a center of social, cultural, religious, and economic exchange and interaction between many civilizations. Palestine thus influenced many other cultures and was influenced by them.

Palestine is a place of great importance for all three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Judaism had appeared in Palestine by the end of the second millennium BCE and, of course, Christianity began with the birth of Jesus in the Palestinian village of Bethlehem. By the seventh century CE Islam was born with the appearance of the Prophet Mohammad on the Arabian Peninsula. The Islamic conquest of Palestine took place in 636 CE. From that date on, Palestine remained under Islamic rule, with the exception of the Crusader invasions, which began at the end of the eleventh century and continued for nearly two-hundred years. Most Arabs of Palestine are not descendants of the newcomers who came here with the Islamic conquest or the Crusades, although they intermingled and later became somewhat integrated with them. Rather, their relationship with the land goes back to the very beginnings of human settlement in Palestine.

Until relatively recently most modern accounts of the history of Palestine were written by European and American archaeologists and scholars. Their emphasis was generally very narrow, especially in the nineteenth century, when most studies focused on attempts to prove the historical accuracy of the Bible. This emphasis on the biblical dimension led to the marginalization of all evidence that pointed to the depth, diversity, and richness of native Palestinian civilization, including its unique contributions to architecture, agriculture, industry, and art, to name just a few. A conscious process was undertaken by Western scholars to justify the claims over Palestine made by European imperial powers, which sought to use it as a bridgehead to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The Zionist enterprise was the agent of these imperialist interests. An association was concocted between the Jewish religion which, like so many other belief systems, played a major part in the development of Palestine's culture and civilization, and the political Zionist project. This merger was used to justify the colonization of Palestine by suggesting that Palestine's native inhabitants were relative newcomers with no real

rights to their lands. The myth was created that the history of Palestine began only with the emergence of Judaism, an idea that is absolutely at odds with all serious studies of Palestinian history.

Educational Campaign
Education in Palestine “Palestine 101”
The Idea

The Alternative Tourism Group plays a vital role in Alternative Tourism in Palestine. It is one of the main organizations that are specialized in leading alternative tours, and showing reality on the ground. Our interest, however, does not only lie in organized groups from churches and political background tourists, and pilgrims. For more than 17 years now, ATG has left its mark on the Palestinian society, as well as on the Tourists who come to Palestine via our programs.

Due to the increasing interest in the Western World in the Palestinian situation, for years now, the ATG has been conducting courses and lectures for a variety of people that come to Palestine, be it for one day, or for a period of time, the ATG has always managed to conduct lectures, and meetings with prominent political, religious, and social leaders.

The Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) is just an example of how the ATG has worked with university students for years. Conducting courses that are seen fit by the university and the ATG, concerning the situation in Palestine, has proven to be a very effective way for knowing more about Palestine. Students that join this venture are exposed to various lectures, courses, meetings and fact on ground tour, as well as the possibility to experience a life changing experience.

Due to the ATG's interest in expanding the work it does with students & working with Youth organization and University students, the ATG is working on its newest campaigns “Education in Palestine, Palestine 101”.

About the Education Campaign

After the success the ATG has received with the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), and the positive feedback the EMU students has shared with the ATG, it was decided that we need to spread this model to other universities in the world.

Tailoring courses, for international students for periods up to 4 weeks. The courses are specially tailored to suit the background of the group. We do include some unique elements that bring added value. Courses such as intensive Arabic language will be given to students throughout the 4 weeks. Trips around Palestine is a given. Learning about the culture and the Palestinian society is a must. Furthermore, ATG is committed to introduce students to Palestinian academics and scholars, as well as political leaders and religious leaders. Meetings and dialogues are very important aspects in the course.

Home stays are a very important part of this trip, where students get to meet real Palestinian families, dine with them, and enjoy a nice evening with them. This manner will enable students to meet real Palestinians, not those they see on TV or hear about on the news. Students will encounter hospitality like never before and they will feel the warmth of a loving family.

Participants of this course will receive a certificate of participation from the ATG for following the course, stating the courses and lectures, names of lecturers, and number of hours followed.

Course description

Course	Description	Hours
Arabic Language for Beginners	In this course, students will be exposed to a beginner Arabic. Students will be able to have a basic conversation, know the alphabets, and express themselves in the streets.	42
Palestine & Israeli Relations	Student will be exposed to the relations between both entities especially in Jerusalem and West bank.	3
Palestinian History	Students will be exposed to Palestinian history from the period of the Ottomans till today.	4.5
Christianity in Palestine	Students will be exposed to the Christian community in Palestine, their history, the culture and their norms, how many churches, how many Christians and their role in society.	1.5
Islam & Christian relations	Palestine is a unique country with its Muslim and Christian relations. Students will be exposed to the relations between both religions throughout history, and their struggle to gain independence, and their relations today.	1.5
Islam& Peace	Students will be exposed to the Islam religion; what they believe their perspectives on peace in Palestine and the means they follow to achieve.	1.5
Islamic fundamentalism	Students will be exposed to the fundamentalism of Islam, what society think of it, and how the Islamic religion views this.	1.5
Refugees	Palestine has a major refugee problem. More than 4 million Palestinian refugees are living in Palestine and in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Student will be exposed about how many refugees camp in Palestine, their way of living, conditions, status, problems, suffering, etc.	1.5
Palestinian women Issues	Palestinian women has played a major role in fighting occupation, students will be exposed to the roles, situation of women in Palestine and how women are perceived in the Palestinian society .	1.5
Kairos for Palestine Document	Kairos for Palestine is a document that was launched in 2010. It is now a vital tool in fighting the occupation peacefully. Students will be exposed to the meaning of Kairos, who	2

	launched it and why, also about the aims and what it achieved so far.	
Current Political Situation	The Palestinian political situation has always been a heated subject. Students will be exposed to the realities of the political situation and effects with an emphasis on human rights, religious rights, and cultural rights.	4.5
Palestinian Health Situation	Students will be exposed to the facilities, possibilities and evolutions of the health sector in Palestine.	1.5
Palestinian Authority	The PA has been in control since 1995, the students will be exposed to how the PA came into Palestine, their tasks, their objectives and their status today.	2
Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions	BDS is a very successful mean of fighting the occupation peacefully. It has proven to be a very important strategy , students will be exposed to the objectives and means taken for BDS.	3
Palestinian Literature	Palestine has always been rich in literature. Edward Said is only one of many Palestinians who have managed to gain international fame from the literature written. Students will be exposed to the famous persons in literature (stories/ poems...), and how they affect society.	3
Palestinian Sport Situation	In this course, students will be exposed to the development of sports, activities, possibilities and facilities.	1
Role of NGO's prior to the PA, and post PA	The Role NGO's played before the PA, and how their role changed with the PA to do complement each other, or they both do the same services.	3
Palestinian Youth situation	Students will be exposed to the Palestinian youth problems (where, what to study/work), their free time, also about the immigration of youth.	1.5
Field Visits	The course will include many field visits and meetings. Some of the tours will be for the porpoise of the course, as well as meeting prominent leaders and organizations; other will be for sightseeing and fun.	10
A written paper by	This will provide each participant to articulate	

participants	their own findings and follow up plans in the form of a researched paper the best of which may be further developed by the participant as a research document for use in the website of ATG.	
Total		90

How it's done:

The Program will be done in a very exciting way.

Prior to their coming, participants will receive regulations & guidelines on what they need to bring and do in order to make their stay in Palestine more comfortable. It will explain background of Palestine, as well as, clothing weather, medical and safety issues.

After sending your cover letter and letter of interest*, students that are accepted, will receive an email from the ATG staff explaining that they have been accepted, and they need to start working on the visa issues of their coming to Palestine**.

Once in Tel Aviv Airport (Ben Gurion), students will be picked up from the airport and transferred to the local families in Beit Sahour that students will stay with.

The first day will include a small welcome reception for introduction and welcoming by ATG, as well as an orientation tour around the city of Beit Sahour, in order for students to know their way around it. Students will then receive a package of things*** they will need during their stay, as well as time to ask questions.

The lectures and meetings will be done in a very dynamic way, students will be able to ask questions, and discuss with the lecturer the issues related to the topics.

During your stay in Palestine, there will be free time available to do things as you please. (Shopping, night life, etc.)

At the end of the course, students will receive a certificate of participation from the ATG, stating the name of lectures, and name of lecturer.

What you need to do?

*You need to write a cover letter with a letter of interest, explaining why you would want to participate in this program together with your CV, You will then receive an acceptance letter from the ATG that will allow you to move forward with registration and preparation for this program.

Send it to, atg@atg.ps, titled Education in Palestine,

**Check if your country needs a Visa:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/05664082-4C0C-4C2E-A593-C9D0C0B20C2A/0/VisaRequirements.pdf>

Give away package

- Palestine & Palestinian guide book
- Map of Bethlehem Area
- Information packages on the ATG
- Syllabus for courses
- Program of your stay and of tours
- Important phone numbers
- Small stationary

Time frame:

The first Class will be held in July, 2014

Price:

Price will include the following:

- Pick up and drop off from the airport
- Accommodation
- Breakfasts & Dinners
- Entrance Fees on trips
- Transportation to and from Trips
- Tuition fees and lecturers
- Study Materials

A Cross-Cultural Program

For the past 12 years my wife and I have been leading the Middle East cross cultural study semester for Eastern Mennonite University. Ever since visiting this part of the world back in the 1970's, I have been impressed by the incredibly rich history, and by the amazing religious, cultural, and political diversity compressed in this exceedingly small geographical area. This is the ideal place to learn about the world, a kind of eternal laboratory of human hopes and fears, dreams and nightmares, love and hate, beauty and ugliness.

But to visit Israel and Palestine does not necessarily mean that genuine learning occurs. What is vital in a cross cultural learning program are honest, trustworthy, and even prophetic local partners who make arrangements for people with courage to share their perspectives, to tell their stories, and to show students the realities with which they live.

A central component of our Middle East study semester is the three to four weeks we spend in Beit Sahour, Palestine in the learning program arranged by Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) living with Palestinian families, studying Arabic, learning from a variety of lecturers, and taking field trips to visit the Wall and places like Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus. We brought our first student group to Beit Sahour in 2001 during the Second Intifada. Since then, thanks to the creative and careful planning of ATG in the midst of violence, invasions, curfews, and check-point closures, we have returned time and again. We have never canceled a single trip; we have never had a single safety problem – a testimony to both the fallacy of the media's portrayal of Palestine, and the commitment and expertise of ATG to visitors' safety. And in the process, the students learn in ways that change, not just their opinions, but their lives.

One of the features of EMU's cross-cultural program in the Middle East is that students are exposed to all sides of the divisive issues that dominate life in both Palestine and Israel. Due to the vast relational network of ATG, they are able to bring together a rich variety of Palestinian leaders ranging from the authors of the *Kairos Document*, politicians, internationally recognized professors, and heroes of creative resistance to the restrictions under which Palestinians live. And they do so knowing that we will be listening to convincing Israeli voices as well. This takes a kind of generosity and even the risk of misunderstanding. But ATG does this with affirmation, flexibility, and humor.

Recently, during the fall Homecoming, EMU celebrated the 30-year anniversary of its cross-cultural study program. For the occasion, they invited Rami Kassis, executive director of ATG, to represent the program in Palestine. It was during Rami's presentation to the former and current students of EMU that the significance of this 12-

year educational partnership with ATG became visible. The students who had studied Palestine with ATG were invited to stand, an astonishing number. But it was at the reunion of students who had participated in the Middle East cross-cultural semester over the years, where the life-changing impact of this experience on those participants became even clearer. Over and over we heard former students describe how their lives had changed following their Middle East cross-cultural study, how their commitments to serve others, to work for peace and justice, to choose careers they felt could contribute to human well-being.

The “alternative” in ATG’s name represents an alternative to status quo tourism, an alternative to the kind of learning that reinforces bias that builds knowledge without wisdom, intellect without insight. ATG represents an alternative by contributing to education that changes students, and the world.

Linford Stutzman

Tour in a Palestinian Village



In one of the classes

